



Meeting Summary June 8, 2016

Attendance

Panel Members: Hank Alinger, Chair (Recused himself from review of Project #16-10 Howard Square Parcel B)
Don Taylor, Vice Chair
Phil Engelke
Bob Gorman
Sujit Mishra
Julie Wilson

DPZ Staff: Kristin O'Connor, Randy Clay, Yvette Zhou, Raj Kudchadkar

Howard Square Parcel B(SDP-16-017)- #16-10

Owner/Developer: ATAPCO Howard Square II Statutory Trust.
Architect & Planner: Henneman & Associates, LLC
Engineer: Benchmark Engineering, Inc
Landscape Architect: Bohler Engineering

1. Call to Order – DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor opened the meeting at 7:32 pm, calling for introductions of the panel, staff and project team.

2. Review Howard Square Parcel B- #16-10

The approximately 5.5 acres property (Parcel B) is located on the northeast quadrant of Route 1 and Route 175 intersection. The property is zoned Corridor Activity Center-Commercial Light Industrial (CAC-CLI) and directly fronts Route 1. Since the project is within the Route 1 Study area, it is subject to the Route 1 Manual.

The project is the final phase (phase 8) of the Howard Square mixed-use development. It was first reviewed by DAP in December 2014 and most recently in August 2015. Further revisions to the site plan require additional DAP review based on the following changes in the building and site design:

1. The multi-level parking deck was previously designed with office and retail uses. The current site plan proposed to shift the deck's location and remove both uses.
2. A second building is now proposed, which will need review for architecture, loading, circulation, etc.

3. Changes to the retail plaza resulting from the revised layout create a substantially different space that will need additional review.

Mr. David Polonsky, Development Director of ATAPCO, stated this is the project's third review by the DAP. Originally, 280 apartment units with grocer or larger retail were planned but the demand is not there. Two items have changed; first, having a two phase solution is no longer an option per code. In order to build the project's residential buildings now, 100% of the retail needs to be built. The second change is the recently adopted zoning modifications that allow the buy-down of retail to 20 sq. ft. per residential unit. The lower number requires a fee-in-lieu payment for the buy-down of retail, which ATAPCO is ready to do. The current site plan is based on a two building solution with a total 344 apartment units, which utilizes the planned development's remaining density allocations. 21,000 sq. ft. of retail is planned that will be viable compared to other Route 1 retail.

Mr. Jeff Henneman, Principal of Henneman & Associates Architects, provided background on Building A noting its revised design in response to the DAP's previous review. It establishes a cross connection between the site and surrounding townhouse development to the north. The six-story building includes an additional 10,000 sq. ft. of ground floor retail and self-contained parking. The site design orients retail for both Building A and B perpendicular to Route 1, which creates a stronger and more balanced relationship between Route 1 and development to the north as well as pedestrian and retail activity. A study was done with Building A to determine a pool can be constructed, which will further enhance the building's north courtyard. Building B includes 64 units accessed directly by a two-level parking deck. Mr. Polonsky stated one major improvement over previous plans is the area between the two buildings is all amenity space for the public with restaurants to encourage pedestrian activity. Mr. Taylor asked what the approximate difference in elevation from Route 1 to the parking deck was. Mr. Polonsky stated 16 ft. on average depending on where one is standing on site. Mr. Polonsky concluded by referencing the need for service retail in the area and the current design will attract these retailers to the community.

Mr. Eric McWilliams, Landscape Architect with Bohler Engineering, stated the streetscape is planned with street trees surrounding the site. Due to overhead wires on the Port Capital side, smaller trees will be installed for screening the garage and softening the street view. There will be foundation plantings of different varieties surrounding the site. Between Building A and B is an open space with planters and benches. The south courtyard features a pool for resident use only and includes semi-private spaces with outdoor furnishings and a fireplace. The north courtyard includes a water feature adding ambience to its semi-private spaces. The courtyard will have more contemporary furnishings.

Mr. Taylor directed staff to present its comments on the project. Mr. Randy Clay, DPZ, requested the DAP members to discuss the following in terms of the Route 1 Design Manual:

1. Landscaping/screening with plantings incorporated into the design of the parking garage to reduce its visual impact on surrounding residential areas;
2. Creating an opportunity to green the upper deck through tree plantings;
3. Creating a central access for pedestrian circulation from parking to Building B;
4. Incorporating wall and landscape screening with the access drive to the plaza;
5. Evaluating Building B's massing and elevations to further distinguish the primary retail base from upper levels through material changes, bay rhythms, color changes and projections;
6. Further study of additional pedestrian access along the Route 1 frontage at the southwestern corner of the parking deck; and
7. Including furnishings along Route1 for transit.

Mr. Taylor stated the orientation of the massing is better than if it were parallel to Route 1. The concept of a retail courtyard makes it more functional than if it were linear. The emphasis of the courtyard could be further enhanced. Stair access up from Route 1 could be wider; visually it would be more receptive to driving by. Pavers in the parking courtyard would further strengthen the area. The parking structure has a hard edge along Route1, which gives the appearance of a building. The retail plan further enhances the residential component.

DAP member Phil Engelke asked for clarification on the clock tower noting its depiction in prior designs. Mr. Polonsky stated it is not in the final stage as they are seeking a design consultant who specializes in monuments and signage. Mr. Henneman stated the height was reduced based on county's sign ordinance. Mr. Engelke recommended further studies with a special consultant since the county's sign code is limiting and based on square footage calculations. Mr. Polonsky will have further meetings with county staff to better understand the requirements. Mr. Engelke asked what the purpose of the monument is, giving the example of Wegman's clock tower, which serves as a landmark. He questioned the location stating the courtyard plaza 80 feet width would allow for a grander staircase and passage under a monument sign, which would enhance the project's branding while serving as an art piece.

DAP member Bob Gorman stated the tower structure looks very lonely on Route 1. The existing parking design is not very convenient for patrons to access the retail and questioned if consideration had been given to rotating the building, although some parking would be lost. Mr. Polonsky responded by acknowledging the concept but noted the project team's many designs and the viability of the existing revised design in terms of the residential and retail program.

DAP member Julie Wilson stated the materials and parking area aren't aesthetically conducive to what the project is attempting to achieve. The parking edge is dark and hard and would benefit from greening and the use of different materials such as glass to flow into the retail better.

DAP member Sujit Mishra agreed the clock tower does not fit into the overall design. With the buildings turned perpendicular, there's a need to think about the different front and side elevations to break up the massing. He suggested changing the materials to help create greater modulation in the skyline. For example, the courtyard recesses could receive more glazing to further differentiate the elevation along Route 1. Mr. Mishra also asked if there are green technologies being applied. Mr. Polonsky said LEED gold is intended although LEED certified is required. There is a high performance property tax credit the developer is seeking. Mr. Mishra asked if there will be rain water harvesting? Mr. Polonsky stated the estimated cost of \$100k is too expensive but solar arrays will be included on top the wrapper garage. The previous building produced 13% of its power from solar; the proposed building will probably produce slightly less.

Ms. Wilson agreed with Building B's overall design but encouraged further evaluation of the retail area's design to allow it to spill out toward Route 1 and into the community.

Mr. Engelke stated the storefront articulation was headed in a good direction and canopies and umbrellas, along with contemporary furnishings, will continue to enhance the street level retail.

The DAP adopted the following recommendations for the project. These recommendations will be forwarded to the Planning Board.

DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor made the following motion:

1. "The applicant reconsider the access from Route 1 into the courtyard in the form of a grander stair and additional articulation of the entryway." Seconded by DAP member Phil Engelke.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

DAP member Phil Engelke made the following motion:

2. "Along with the grand stair, rethink the clock tower and think of it more as a gateway to that central feature. It could also be in steel to reflect the street furniture but think of the clock tower as a gateway and landmark." Seconded by DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

DAP member Bob Gorman made the following motion:

3. "Consider the plaza's special paving extending all the way to the entrance at the far end at Hearthside Way, between the two buildings, so it reads like a plaza, and if the community has a special event you can close it off and do something." Seconded by DAP member Julie Wilson.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

DAP member Julie Wilson made the following motion:

4. "Look at the parking garage façade as a component of the retail. Look at the materials used so it's not a wall and doesn't feel like a parking garage at the end of the site but something exciting and part of the site." Seconded by DAP member Bob Gorman.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

DAP member Sujit Mishra made the following motion:

5. "Think more about the courtyard façade and the overall skyline." Seconded by DAP member Julie Wilson.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

DAP member Julie Wilson made the following motion:

6. "Look at the corners of the plaza where the buildings are and see if it can't bleed out more onto Route 1 and out into the community in terms of texture, landscaping and site furnishings." Seconded by DAP member Bob Gorman.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

DAP member Phil Engelke made the following motion:

7. "Look at the whole perimeter of the parking structure to see where there are opportunities for pedestrians and green introduction without making the public space too large." Seconded by DAP member Julie Wilson.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

3. Other Business and Informational Items:

- a. Ms. Kristin O'Connor, DPZ, reviewed items generally related to the DAP's meeting calendar, applicant submissions and Rules of Procedure.

4. Call to Adjourn

DAP Chair Mr. Hank Alinger adjourned the meeting at 9:02 pm.